

AT THE CINEMA

PAUL FISCHER REVIEWS TWO GREAT NEW CINEMA RELEASES



STAR TREK IV – THE VOYAGE HOME (PG)

Being a trekkie from way back, it was with sheer enthusiasm that I approached the fourth big-screen *Star Trek* saga, and after its conclusion, there wasn't an ounce of disappointment in me. Not only is this new film the best of the series, but it is, in itself, a dazzling potpourri of brilliant comedy, special effects and a message or two. It's a wonderful film, and probably one of the top films that was released in 1986.

For those who watched the superb *Star Trek III*, the film ended with the crew of the Starship Enterprise watching the destruction of their beloved spaceship, along with a bunch of nasty Klingons. Admiral James T. Kirk and his trusty crew are now exiled on the barren planet Vulcan, where Vulcan Spock is trying to re-discover himself, and his crew, after having been regenerated on the doomed planet Genesis. The Enterprise crew is in danger of being tried back home on numerous charges, but decide to face the music. En route, they hear a distress signal; apparently the Earth is in danger of destruction, and the answer is a journey that takes them back in time to modern day San Francisco. Here, they must try and collect two hump back whales to bring back to the 23rd century. How they go about it – and why – forms the core to this funny and unique movie.

Star Trek IV is not just another sequel; in fact, for the most part, it's a film so much broader and expansive than its predecessors, that even non-*Star Trek* fans will get enormous pleasure out of this stunning film. It begins pretty well like any *Trek* movie, then, as the Enterprise crew confront contemporary American society, the film grows into something that is astonishing for its humour (some of the comedy is brilliant in itself), broadened thematic concerns and growth of characters. This is a spellbinding cinematic odyssey that never lets up.

Not only does *Star Trek IV* present us with a comedic look at cultural clashes (in particular when it focuses on language difficulties), but it explores the tragedy of man's own self-destruction through its barbaric treatment of the whale. The film can be seen on so many different levels, and each of its layers is complete.

The performances are all predictably top-notch, with William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy displaying a superb comedic sense for their early 1986 sequences. Also, there is Catherine Hicks, excellent as a marine biologist who gets more than she bargains for when she meets Kirk and Spock.

Not only is there Leonard Nimoy the brilliant actor, but the assured and mature film maker, whose direction of *Star Trek IV* is astounding in itself. There's no doubt that the incomparable Mr Nimoy is a director to watch

out for. Visually, the film is a knockout, beautifully photographed and tightly put together.

There's everything – and more – in this film, from superb comedy, suspense, adventure and plenty of food for thought. *Star Trek IV – The Voyage Home* should not be regarded as another *Trek* sequel; believe me, it is far more than that. Beam yourself down and don't miss one of the year's best.

THREE AMIGOS (PG)

With summer holidays upon us, a good laugh, a song or two, and a liberal dose of adventurous merriment may well be the order of the day. Well, you can have all three in the wonderful new Western comedy, *Three Amigos*, starring Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and comic newcomer Martin Short. Directed by the often reliable John Landis, the film is an affectionately comic tribute to those old fashioned Western adventures that featured old prairie songs, villainous rascals and damsels in distress.

The year is 1916, and the impoverished Mexican village of Santa Poco is being perpetually terrorised by the villainous bandit El Guapo (Alfonso Arau) and his despicable army of henchmen. The town is desperate for salvation, so a beautiful villager's daughter Carmen (Patrice Martinez), goes into town to seek out those with the courage to do battle against Guapo. Then, in a church, she sees a movie about the fearless Three Amigos. She telegraphs them, offering them 100,000 pesos for their assistance. As it turns out, these three "amigos" are simple-minded movie stars, who have just been sacked. So off they go to Santa Poco, thinking that Guapo is just another actor, and it's all a show. Little do they know what misadventures lay ahead of this dim witted trio.

Three Amigos is a funny, boisterous comedy, that sets out what it is designed to do, without resorting to graphic sex and violence. Like the film's central characters, it is a film of gentle innocence and clever humour, and it works beautifully, under the creative guidance of director Landis.

As the film's bumbling heroes, Steve Martin, Chevy Chase and Martin Short make a superbly comic trio, and they also perform three songs to harmonious perfection. Beautifully shot on location in Arizona, the film is a delightful satire on *The Magnificent Seven*, old Hollywood, and classic folkloric tradition. It's quite a gem which shows Martin and Chase in a different light. To sum it up, it's a real hoot.